

## CHAPTER IV: WELFARE RECIDIVISM AMONG THE COHORTS

This chapter presents data on welfare recidivism among the AFDC and Work First exit cohorts. The experiences of the four exit cohorts — those families leaving AFDC in February 1995 and those leaving Work First in September 1996, June 1997, and June 1998 — were examined to see whether there were differences in the likelihood of returning to welfare. We analyzed 36 months of data for the AFDC cohort and the September 1996 Work First Cohort. For the two new cohorts, we analyzed 24 and 12 months, respectively. For each cohort, we calculated the percentage of cases that returned to AFDC or Work First and received benefits in any month subsequent to program exit. All families receiving benefits in any month were counted without regard to whether the case had cycled on and off cash assistance in earlier months.

### A. OVERALL RECIDIVISM PATTERNS

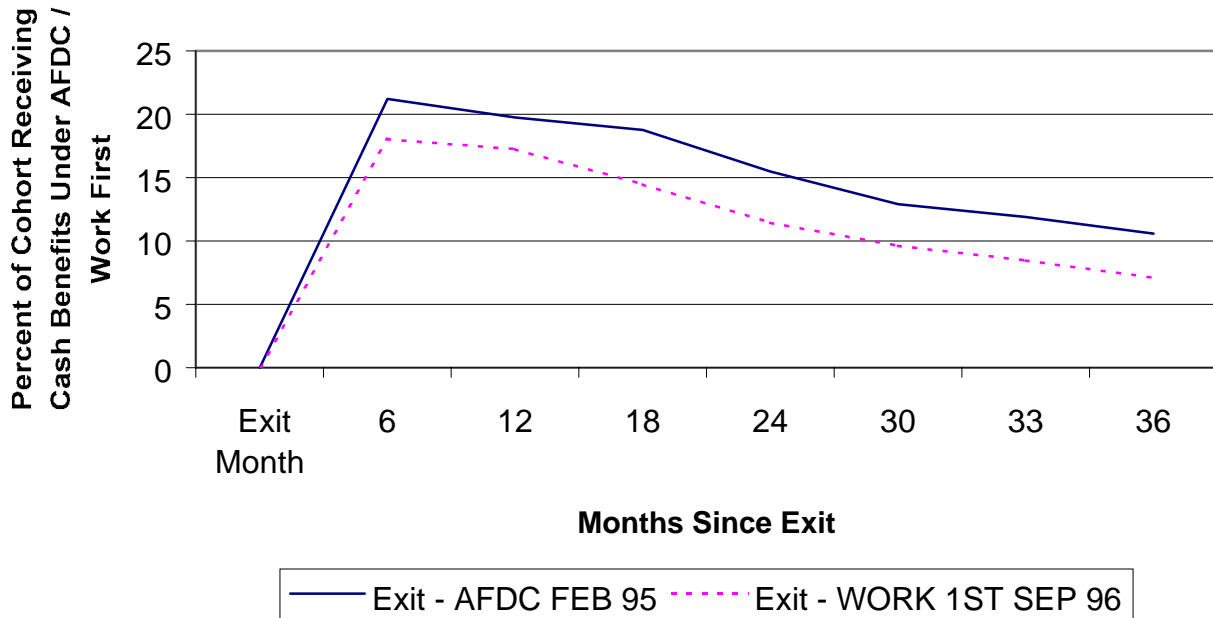
As indicated in *Exhibit IV-1: Welfare Recidivism at Specific Intervals*, fewer of the families in the Work First exit cohorts returned to cash assistance in each follow-up month than did the families in the AFDC cohort. At six months after exit, 21.2 percent of the AFDC cohort had returned to welfare, compared to only 18.0 percent of the September 1996 exit cohort, 18.7 percent of the June 1997 exit cohort, and 15.5 percent of the June 1998 exit cohort. At month 12 after exit, 19.7 percent of the AFDC exit cohort was back on welfare, compared to only 13.9 percent of the June 1998 exit cohort.

**Exhibit IV-1**  
**WELFARE RECIDIVISM AT SPECIFIC INTERVALS**  
**(PERCENT OF COHORT RECEIVING CASH BENEFITS**  
**IN THE SPECIFIC MONTH)**

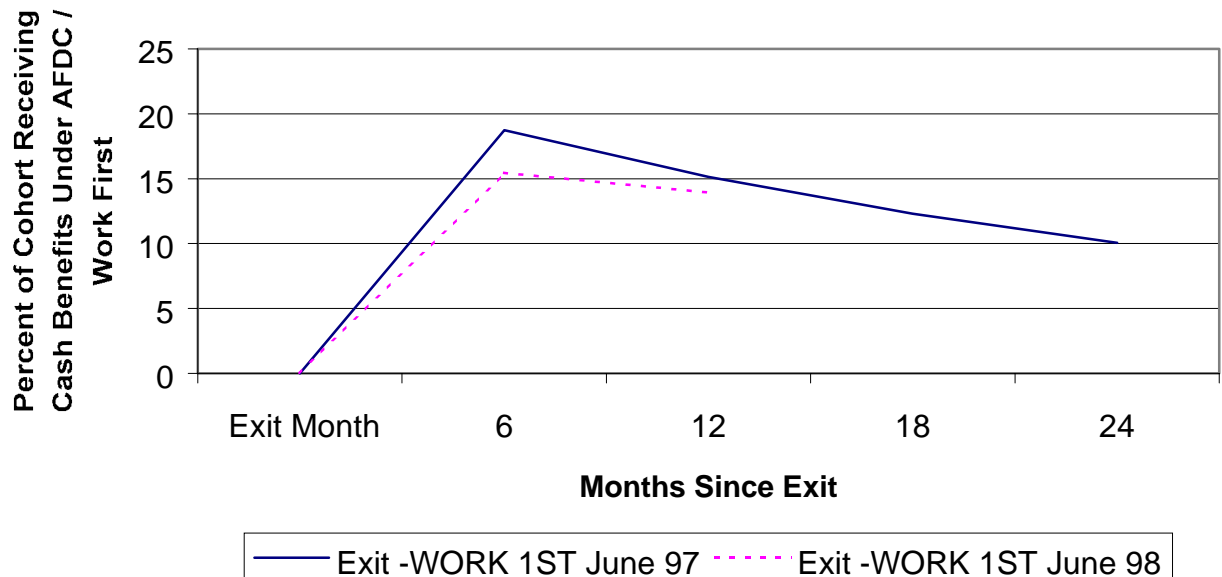
<b>MONTHS SINCE ENTRY</b>	<b>AFDC COHORT FEB 95 (N=7217)</b>	<b>WORK FIRST COHORT SEP 96 (N=7531)</b>	<b>WORK FIRST COHORT JUN 97 (N=7236)</b>	<b>WORK FIRST COHORT JUN 98 (N=6349)</b>
Exit Month	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
6	21.2%	18.0%	18.7%	15.5%
12	19.7%	17.2%	15.1%	13.9%
18	18.8%	14.5%	12.3%	
24	15.5%	11.4%	10.0%	
30	12.9%	9.6%		
36	10.6%	7.1%		

Exhibit IV-2 and Exhibit IV-3 provide a graphic illustration of recidivism among the two original cohorts, showing the percentage of each exit cohort who received cash assistance each month.

**Exhibit IV-2  
WELFARE RECIDIVISM AMONG  
THE AFDC AND SEP 96 WORK FIRST EXIT COHORTS**



**Exhibit IV-3  
WELFARE RECIDIVISM AMONG THE JUNE 1997 AND  
JUNE 1998 EXIT COHORTS**



The experience of individual families within the exit cohorts is shown in *Exhibit IV-4: Number of Months Individual Families Received Welfare After Initial Program Exit*. This table shows the number of months during specific follow-up months that a family received cash benefits after exiting welfare. The table identifies the extent to which some of the families returned to AFDC or Work First, and then re-exited the program once or multiple times after they first left welfare. Among the AFDC exit cohort, 55.9 percent never returned to AFDC after exiting in February 1995, while 62.7 percent of the families exiting from Work First in September 1996 never returned.

**Exhibit IV-4**  
**NUMBER OF MONTHS INDIVIDUAL FAMILIES RECEIVED**  
**WELFARE AFTER INITIAL PROGRAM EXIT**

<b>MONTHS RECEIVING WELFARE</b>	<b>AFDC COHORT FEB 95</b>	<b>WORK FIRST COHORT SEP 96</b>	<b>WORK FIRST COHORT JUN 97</b>	<b>WORK FIRST COHORT JUN 98</b>
0	55.9%	62.7%	64.7%	71.8%
1 to 3	5.3%	4.8%	5.8%	6.3%
4 to 6	7.8%	7.8%	8.0%	8.3%
7 to 9	4.4%	4.9%	5.4%	5.4%
10 to 12	4.8%	4.6%	4.4%	4.6%
13 to 15	3.2%	3.3%	3.4%	3.7%
16 to 18	3.2%	2.9%	2.5%	
19 to 21	2.6%	2.0%	2.2%	
22 to 24	2.1%	2.1%	1.8%	
25 to 27	1.9%	1.6%	1.8%	
28 to 30	1.7%	1.6%		
31 to 33	1.3%	0.9%		
34 to 36	5.9%	1.1%		
Total	100.0% (N=7217)	100.0% (N=7531)	100.0% (N=7236)	100.0% (N=6349)

The data in the exhibit show that 5.9 percent of the AFDC cohort received welfare for 34 months or more after exit, compared to only 1.1 percent of the work first cohort. The data in the exhibit also show the recidivism patterns among the two new cohorts. However, the data for these cohorts is not strictly comparable to the data for the original cohorts because of the differing follow-up periods.

The standardize the follow-up period across all four cohorts, Exhibit IV-5 shows the number of months in which families in each cohort received welfare during the first 15 months after exiting. *The data indicate that 71.8 percent of the June 1998 exit cohort never returned to welfare in the first 15 months after exiting, compared to only 64.1 percent of the AFDC cohort.*

**Exhibit IV-5**  
**NUMBER OF MONTHS INDIVIDUAL FAMILIES RECEIVED**  
**WELFARE DURING 15 MONTHS AFTER INITIAL PROGRAM EXIT**

<b>MONTHS RECEIVING WELFARE</b>	<b>AFDC COHORT FEB 95</b>	<b>WORK FIRST COHORT SEP 96</b>	<b>WORK FIRST COHORT JUN 97</b>	<b>WORK FIRST COHORT JUN 98</b>
0	64.1%	68.2%	68.7%	71.8%
1 to 3	7.0%	5.9%	6.6%	6.3%
4 to 6	9.4%	9.3%	7.9%	8.3%
7 to 9	6.3%	6.0%	6.1%	5.4%
10 to 12	6.5%	5.4%	5.6%	4.6%
13 to 15	6.8%	5.2%	5.2%	3.7%
Total	100.0% (N=7217)	100.0% (N=7531)	100.0% (N=7236)	100.0% (N=6349)

In addition, 6.8 percent of the AFDC cohort received welfare for at least 13 months during the 15 months after exiting, compared to only 3.7 percent of the June 1998 Work First exit cohort. These data confirm, therefore, that the Work First program is having a significant impact in reducing recidivism among families leaving welfare. The 15 month follow-up period is especially useful because the AFDC exit cohort were potentially subject to the new Work First rules about 16 months after they left welfare. The data in Exhibit IV-5, therefore, provide the clearest picture of how recidivism has changed under the Work First program.

## **B. CASES WITH ADULTS VERSUS CHILD-ONLY CASES**

*Exhibit IV-6: Welfare Recidivism at Specific Intervals After Exit, by Case Type*, shows the percentage of each cohort who received cash assistance at different months after initial exit, by whether the cases were “child-only” cases or included children and adults.<sup>1</sup>

Within each cohort, *the average child-only cases were much less likely to return to welfare in the first six months after entry than the cases with adults*. About 22.4 percent of the cases with adults had returned to welfare within six months, compared to only 14.7 percent of the child-only cases. This same pattern is also true for the three Work First exit cohorts. The reason for this pattern is probably that the child only cases tend to leave welfare for different reasons than the cases involving adults.

<sup>1</sup> Some cases for which it could not be determined whether or not it was a child-only case were excluded. These included 127 cases from the AFDC exit cohort, and 168 cases from the Work First cohort.

**Exhibit IV-6**  
**WELFARE RECIDIVISM AT SPECIFIC**  
**INTERVALS AFTER EXIT, BY CASE TYPE**  
**(PERCENT OF EACH COHORT RECEIVING CASH ASSISTANCE PAYMENTS**  
**DURING THE SPECIFIC FOLLOW-UP MONTH)**

MONTHS SINCE EXIT	AFDC COHORT FEB 95		WORK FIRST COHORT SEP 96	
	CHILD AND ADULT (N=6,274)	CHILD ONLY (N=816)	CHILD AND ADULT (N=6,143)	CHILD ONLY (N=1,220)
EXIT MONTH	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
6	22.4%	14.7%	19.6%	11.5%
12	20.7%	13.8%	18.5%	11.6%
18	19.6%	13.8%	15.5%	9.7%
24	16.0%	12.1%	12.0%	9.0%
30	13.4%	9.3%	9.9%	8.4%
36	10.8%	8.8%	7.0%	7.4%

MONTHS SINCE EXIT	WORK FIRST COHORT JUN 97		WORK FIRST COHORT JUN 98	
	CHILD AND ADULT (N=6326)	CHILD ONLY (N=775)	CHILD AND ADULT (N=5487)	CHILD ONLY (N=728)
EXIT MONTH	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
6	19.7%	13.4%	16.4%	10.0%
12	15.7%	12.6%	14.7%	10.0%
18	12.5%	11.9%		
24	10.1%	10.3%		

The data in Exhibit IV-6 show that the differences in recidivism between the child only cases and the cases with adults tend to diminish over time. For example, among the September 1996 exit cohort, there was no difference in recidivism rates between the two types of cases 36 months after exit.

### C. CASH PAYMENT AMOUNTS

*Exhibit IV-7: Total Cash Payments During Specific Months After Entry*, shows the distribution of welfare payments among families in the exit cohorts. As indicated, there were more Work First families in the lower payment levels, and fewer at the higher levels. For example, 22.7 percent of the AFDC cohort had payment levels of \$2,000 or more after returning to welfare, compared to only 18.9 percent of the September 1996 cohort.

**Exhibit IV-7**  
**CASH PAYMENTS AMONG THE EXIT COHORTS DURING**  
**SPECIFIC MONTHS AFTER INITIAL EXIT**

<b>TOTAL PAYMENT AMOUNT</b>	<b>AFDC COHORT FEB 95</b>	<b>WORK FIRST COHORT SEP 96</b>	<b>WORK FIRST COHORT JUN 97</b>	<b>WORK FIRST COHORT JUN 98</b>
No Payments	57.7%	62.9%	70.8%	73.6%
\$1 to \$999	11.0%	9.5%	11.1%	11.2%
\$1,000 to \$1,999	8.6%	8.7%	10.6%	9.4%
\$2,000 to \$2,999	5.9%	5.5%	6.4%	5.0%
\$3,000 to \$3,999	4.9%	4.3%	1.0%	0.7%
\$4,000 and over	11.9%	9.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Total	100.0% (N=7,217)	100.0% (N=7,531)	100.0% (N=7236)	100.0% (N=6349)

\*NOTE: Data for the June 1997 and June 1998 cohorts were available only for 18 months and 12 months respectively.

The data in exhibit IV-7 includes information on the two new cohorts, but the data for these cohorts cannot be compared easily with the data for the original cohorts because the percentages were calculated using different follow-up periods. Exhibit IV-8 shows the total cash payments received by families in the four cohorts during a standardized 12-month period after exiting welfare. The data show that only 15.1 percent of the June 1998 exit cohort had payments of \$1,000 or more during the first 12 months after leaving welfare, compared to 19.4 percent of the AFDC exit cohort. In addition, 73.6 percent of the June 1998 exit cohort received no payments, compared to only 66.9 percent of the AFDC exit cohort.

**Exhibit IV-8**  
**CASH PAYMENTS AMONG THE EXIT COHORTS — FIRST 12**  
**MONTHS AFTER INITIAL EXIT**

<b>TOTAL PAYMENT AMOUNT</b>	<b>AFDC COHORT FEB 95</b>	<b>WORK FIRST COHORT SEP 96</b>	<b>WORK FIRST COHORT JUN 97</b>	<b>WORK FIRST COHORT JUN 98</b>
No Payments	66.9%	70.5%	70.8%	73.6%
\$1 to \$999	13.7%	12.1%	11.1%	11.2%
\$1,000 to \$1,999	11.8%	10.6%	10.6%	9.4%
\$2,000 to \$2,999	6.4%	6.0%	6.4%	5.0%
\$3,000 to \$3,999	1.2%	0.9%	1.0%	0.7%
\$4,000 and over	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Total	100.0% (N=7,217)	100.0% (N=7,531)	100.0% (N=7236)	100.0% (N=6349)